



*Above is one of the rare photos where horror writer and "weird fiction" legend H.P. Lovecraft is attempting a smile. It's a fitting way to kick off these 20 facts and bits of trivia about a now famous author who lived much of his life in poverty, died in a agony and was almost entirely unknown and unread until after his death:*

When Lovecraft was 3 his father went insane and died 5 years later, most likely from "general paresis of the insane" caused by syphilis.

Lovecraft's first attempt at writing the "weird fiction" he would later become famous for is a story called "The Noble Eavesdropper." The story (which some say he wrote at the age of 6 or 7) does not survive.

His first published work was a letter about "astronomical matters" that was printed in The Providence Sunday Journal in 1906.

Lovecraft became a prolific letter writer and by some accounts wrote 87,500 letters during his lifetime. He was also in the habit of dating letters 200 years earlier than the current date.

Although now considered one of the greatest early American writers of horror, Lovecraft never received his high school diploma.

Lovecraft was friends with many contemporary writers of his time, including Conan creator Robert Howard, Robert Bloch and Fritz Leiber.

Lovecraft was once "killed" by fellow writer Bloch in the short story "Shambler from the Stars" and later killed Bloch in turn in a story called "The Haunter of the Dark."

Lovecraft ghost wrote a story called "Imprisoned with the Pharaohs" for Harry Houdini, who later commissioned Lovecraft to write a book debunking superstition (which was never finished due to Houdini's death).

Although Lovecraft is most famous for creating the Cthulhu Mythos, he himself never used that term. Lovecraft referred to his own series of interconnected mythos stories as the "Arkham Cycle."

Lovecraft's favorite author was Edgar Allan Poe, of whom he said "Poe was my God of fiction."

Lovecraft in turn influenced numerous writers that came after him, including Stephen King, Cliver Barker and Neil Gaiman. King called Lovecraft one of his biggest influences and "the twentieth century's greatest practitioner of the classic horror tale."

Lovecraft only truly became popular after his death, when friend and fellow writer August Derleth founded Arkham House publishing to help keep Lovecraft's work alive.

All of Lovecraft's stories written before 1923 are now in the public domain. However, it's not clear who owns or owned the copyright to many of his works, and the status of stories written after 1923 is disputed.

The statuette for the World Fantasy Award is a bust of Lovecraft, in honor of his writing. The award is informally referred to as a Howard.

Lovecraft created one of the few fictional books that was later turned into a real book: The Necronomicon. No less than 4 versions of the Necronomicon have since been created.

Although everyone knows Lovecraft was born on Aug. 20, 1890, and died on March 15, 1937, he's one of the few people whose "middle day" of life is also on record. [A fan once calculated](#) that December 2, 1913, was the exact halfway point of Lovecraft's life.

While he died in 1937, Lovecraft didn't actually get his own headstone until 1977, when fans pitched in to buy him one.

Lovecraft isn't buried under his headstone, however, even though [hundreds of people visit it each](#) year to pay homage to him. (His body is buried nearby.)

On Oct. 13, 1997, someone apparently tried to dig up Lovecraft's body, not knowing it wasn't under the headstone. They dug down about 3 feet before giving up for unknown reasons.